

pagan society together. They instinctively felt what was coming, and were sensible of approaching doom. Christianity was the enemy, the proclaimed enemy, of their religion, of their point of view of this life as well as of the next, of their customs, of their pleasures, of their arts. Paganism was fighting for existence. What wonder that it snatched at any weapon wherewith to strike ?

The personal attitude of Diocletian towards religion in general is best seen in the edict which he issued against the Manichaeans. The date is somewhat uncertain, but it undoubtedly preceded the anti-Christian edicts. Manichaeism took its rise in Persia, its principal characteristic being the practice of thaumaturgy, and it spread fast throughout the East. Diocletian ordered the chiefs of the sect to be burned to death ; their followers were to have their goods confiscated and to suffer capital punishment unless they recanted; while persons of rank who had disgraced themselves by joining such a shameful and infamous set of men were to lose their patrimony and be sent to the mines. These were savage enactments, and it is important to see how the Emperor justified them. Fortunately his language is most explicit. " The gods/" he says, " have determined what is just and true; the wisest of mankind, by counsel and by deed, have proved and firmly established their principles. It is not, therefore, lawful to oppose their divine and human wisdom, or to pretend that a new religion can correct the old one. To wish to change the institutions of our ancestors is the greatest of crimes/" Nothing